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AUCTION SALES OF CALIFORNIANA

The increasing interest in Californiana has been made very manifest during the past season by the appearance in the auction rooms of a number of highly important documents which have fetched very high prices.

The most important lot was that known as the Fort Sutter Papers, sold at the Anderson Galleries, New York, November 28, 1921, and bought for Mr. Henry E. Huntington at \$8,450.00. Strictly speaking, these are not Fort Sutter documents, but the papers belonging to E. W. Kern, who was in command at Fort Sutter, first representing Fremont, and secondly, under the appointment of Commodore Stockton. The collection consists largely of letters addressed to Kern while in command at Fort Sutter, together with some payrolls, receipts, etc. A few important documents were also included, such as Commodore Sloat's manuscript proclamation on taking possession of California, July 7, a letter written by George McKinstry, Jr., dated San Diego, December 23, 1851, and a number relating to the Donner party and the efforts for their relief.

In addition to the documents relating to California, some one hundred and twenty-two in number, are a few relating to Fremont's disastrous winter journey of 1848 and 1849, in which Kern's brother Benjamin lost his life, and a few of 1851 and later date of more interest to New Mexicans than to Californians.

It is rather a too formidable task to give here a full account of the contents of these thirty-nine volumes, containing over one hundred and fifty important documents, but relying upon Mr. Huntington's well-known generosity, we hope that we may be privileged to furnish the readers of the *Quarterly* in the near future with copies of the most important, many of which are certainly of great value.

The history of these documents is very obscure. It is obvious that they belonged to Lieutenant E. M. Kern, as with few exceptions they are all addressed to him or are connected with his office as commandant at Fort Sutter. According to Seymour Dunbar, who wrote the account for the sale, they were lost in the New Mexico mountains for an unknown period.

However, it is safe to assume that they were not lost for very long, and probably they were retained by Kern until his death. It is generally supposed that at one time they were in the possession of Mr. Gunther, a well-known Chicago collector. How they came into the hands of the New York dealer who sold them, we cannot say. Thinking to enhance the desirability of them, he employed Mr. Seymour Dunbar to write a description of their contents, and together with a list of the documents these remarks were printed by the De Vinne Press and elaborately bound with the documents in thirty-nine volumes, making a very ornamental collection. From the description as furnished by Mr. Dunbar, it appears that the most interesting of all the documents in the collection is the letter written by George McKinstry, Jr. to Kern from San Diego. In this, McKinstry, who had been very friendly with Kern while acting as clerk for Sutter, gives a brief account to date of the individuals who were known to them at the period when they were both at Fort Sutter.

The most important single document to be sold was an original proclamation by William B. Ide, dated Sonoma, June 15, 1846, sold by the American Art Association December 6, 1921, for \$530.00—and also purchased by Mr. Huntington. As far as can be ascertained at present, this is the only known original of this proclamation, of which no doubt several were made and signed by Ide. At the time that Mr. Bancroft wrote he was unable to locate an original and was obliged to content himself with various contemporary copies which had been made. It is certain that Ide signed more than one of these proclamations, but just how many we have never been able to discover, nor is it known to whom they were all sent. It is generally stated that Robert Semple was the secretary of the Bear Flag Party, but this proclamation is not in his handwriting nor in that of Ide. As a matter of fact, it is extremely well written and only two words are misspelled. It is obvious that it was not written by any of the frontiersmen who were in a large majority in the party. In another part of the Quarterly will be found a reproduction of this proclamation taken from this copy now in Mr. Huntington's possession.

In the same sale there were two other documents sold, of some interest, namely, the parole signed by Vallejo, Prudon, Leese and Noriega, at Fort Sutter, and an original agreement of enlistment, at Fort Sutter, August 8, 1846, to serve three

months as dragoons, entered into by James Gregson, nine others including John A. Sutter, and twenty Indians.

While numbers of California books have been sold during the past season, nothing new has been discovered, but the rarer items have continued to bring high prices. At the sale of Dr. O'Brien's books, March 27 and 28, 1922, at the Anderson Galleries, the Leonard Narrative fetched \$700.00, the highest price for which it has ever sold; the Palmer Journal, \$250.00; the 1833 Pattie Narrative, \$85.00; the Johnson and Winter Route Across The Rocky Mountains, Lafayette 1846, \$590.00; and Ed. McGowan's Narrative, \$87.50. Aside from these items the California books in the sale were of but little value.

At the same sale at which the Fort Sutter Papers were sold a large number of books of California interest appeared, and high prices were obtained. Marcus Benjamin's Sketch of John Bidwell, Washington 1907, sold for \$81.00; Beschke's Dreadful Sufferings and Thrilling Adventures of an Overland Party of Emigrants to California, \$130.00; Boucard's Travels of a Naturalist, privately printed in London in 1894, and containing an account of California in 1851, \$67.50; the letters from California which appeared in the "Friend" in Honolulu in 1846, and issued with a special title page, \$72.50; Clarke's Travels in Mexico, Arizona and California, Boston 1852, \$85.00; Johnston's Experiences of a Forty-Niner, privately printed in Pittsburgh, 1892, \$106.00,—probably the same copy as sold in the O'Brien sale, where it brought \$150.00. This sale, which was made up of books belonging to a well-known New York dealer, was notable for the extremely high prices obtained for books which cannot even be classed as scarce. As an instance we quote Canfield's Diary of a Forty-Niner, the original edition, which brought \$82.00, and De Witt's Life of Joaquin Murieta, the 1888 edition, which brought \$31.00.

At the sale at the Art Association, March 27, 1922, two broadsides hitherto unknown appeared, both printed in Sonora during the anti-foreign agitation there in July 1850. The first is an appeal written by the editor of the Sonora Herald, probably J. B. Marvin, counselling moderation, and which appeared, together with some advertisements to fill up the page, July 20. The mass meeting took place the following day, the 21st, and the resolutions adopted were printed separately in broadside form in both Spanish and English some time the following

week. A copy in English appeared in this sale and brought \$130.00, while the "Triumph of Law," the one printed on July 20, brought \$45.00.

At this same sale, what purported to be a complete set of Hutchings Magazine brought \$260.00.

California prints have not been as much sought after during the past season as books and manuscripts, and but few noteworthy sales have been effected. A considerable number have appeared in auction rooms, including an especially fine collection at the American Art Association in March 1922. At this sale the well-known view of a stage on the California-Oregon route, with a view of Mt. Shasta in the background, sold for \$230.00; but generally speaking, none of the other views brought anything more than very ordinary prices.

During the season a try-out was made of the San Francisco market by a sale February 4, which was stated in the foreword to contain no "junk." However, if it contained no junk it contained no item of any particular interest. Nevertheless the sale was well attended and the books brought very fair prices.



NEW CALIFORNIA BOOKS

History of the San Francisco Committee of Vigilance of 1851. A study of Social Control on the California Frontier in the days of the Gold Rush. By Mary Floyd Williams, Ph.D. Berkeley, Cal.: (University of California Press) 1921. In two volumes.

In the early days of San Francisco the conditions prevailing and the circumstances surrounding its development did not essentially differ from those of many other primitive western settlements. Governments were formed; courts, banks, churches, schools and similar institutions were established; sand hills were reduced and lands reclaimed; streets and wharves were constructed; commercial and mercantile operations were extended in all directions; some domestic life was assumed and society was gradually brought to some degree of unity.